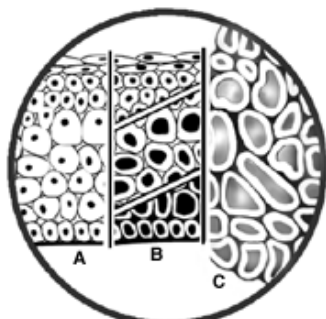


Utah Cancer Control Program

Laser Vaporization or Ablation



Three microscopic views of tissue cells from cervix - Cells in view A are normal cells. Cells in view B show dysplasia. View C shows cancer cells.

WHAT IS LASER VAPORIZATION OR ABLATION?

Laser surgery is the use of a narrow beam of intense light to kill cancerous cells. This procedure can be performed in your health care provider's office with no or little discomfort. A laser beam is used to destroy the abnormal surface cells.

HOW IS LASER VAPORIZATION PERFORMED?

The laser produces a beam of infrared light that is invisible to the eye and is focused by the lens of the colposcope to a minute spot size (0.1-2 millimeters).

ADVANTAGES OF LASER SURGERY

Lasers cause minimal bleeding, allowing surgeons to have a clear view of the area of surgery. Because of their precision, lasers allow doctors to work on small and hard-to-reach parts of the body. Health care providers can also vary how deeply the laser penetrates tissue by adjusting the light's intensity.

Laser surgery may pose less risk of infection and cause minimal scarring. In some cases, laser surgery is faster than traditional surgery, shortening recovery time.

Some laser surgeries are performed under a local anesthetic in a doctor's office. Others require general anesthesia and a hospital stay. This surgery is an easy painless therapy for dysplasia.

DISADVANTAGES OF LASER SURGERY

The major disadvantage of laser surgery is that it requires sophisticated equipment. Because most gynecologists do not have a laser in their office it must be performed at the hospital, which increases the cost of the surgery.

WHEN TO CONTACT YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

Contact your health care provider if you experience any of the following symptoms during your recovery:

1. Abnormal bleeding
2. Vaginal discharge that has a foul odor
3. Increased pain
4. Fever

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER HAVING LASER SURGERY

Vaginal drainage or spotting is normal for several weeks following LASER surgery. A blackish-brown clumped vaginal discharge the evening of or the day following surgery is normal.

A moderate amount of bleeding may begin several days after LASER, but this is usually present for only 2 or 3 days.

1. Avoid the use tampons for 2 months following LASER surgery.
2. Abstain from sexual intercourse for 3 to 6 weeks following LASER
3. Do not douche for 3 months following LASER surgery.
4. Avoid heavy exercise for 24 hours following LASER surgery.
5. Do not have whirlpools or saunas for 2-3 weeks following LASER surgery.
6. Showers, baths and swimming following LASER surgery are allowed